(a) whether it is a fact that with the security becoming a growing national concern, CH has urged the Centre to reduce dependence on import of strategic defence equipment;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the CH National Committee on Defence has suggested that Government should immediately inform its overseas suppliers of equipment that it would look towards indigenous sources from now on; and

(c) what are the other suggestions made by the CH National Committee on Defence?

THE MrNISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) The Confederation of Indian Industry (CH) has been interacting with the Government on various defence procurement related policy matters including the participation of private industry in the manufacture of defence equipment. It has not specifically spoken of reducing dependence on import of strategic defence equipment but has stated that Industry be permitted to partake in the Government's objective to achieve 70% self-reliance in defence by 2005. The CH National Committee on Defence has not made any specific suggestion about the overseas suppliers being informed regarding procurement from indigenous sources only. It has, however, made certain suggestions regarding licensing mechanism and procedures for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposals, preference to local industry, permission for Joint Ventures/Technical tie-up, between Indian industry with foreign investor, level playing field *vis-a-vis* the public sector undertakings and the foreign equipment suppliers, involvement of private industry in the perspective plans for equipment procurement by Armed Forces, providing information to the industry about technological requirement of the Armed Forces and R and D support to private industry.

Indo-U.S. joint efforts on missile defence

1700. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and US are working together on missile defence;

(b) if so, whether in the recent press conference by the Under Secretary, Arms Control and International Security in the State Department has pointed out that US and India are exploring the possibilities of having a joint missile defence programme;

(c) if so, to what extent US missile defence programme would help India's defence capabilities;

(d) whether any agreement in this regard was signed between India and US; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c),to (e) Does not arise.

Purchase of Russian aircrafts for defence purpose

1701. SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

. (a) whether Government of India propose to acquire Russian aircraft for defence purposes; and

(b) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Russian aircraft have been in the inventory of the Indian Air Force for almost four decade and different aircraft are procured from time to time as per requirement.

Amount paid for purchase of 10 mirage 2000-H/TH aircrafts

1702. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of money paid for purchase of 10 Mirage 2000-H/TH aircrafts by India;

(b) whether extra money was paid for speares, while this purchase was negotiated;

(c) whether it is also a fact that a Panamian registered firm had filed a suit in Cbiffmercial Tribunal of Paris seeking payment from Dassault Aviation on this deal for the services rendered by it in clinching the deal; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Due to confidentiality clause in the contract, it is not possible to disclose this information.